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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

NOAA, Bermuda partner to protect humpback whales in the North Atlantic

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NOAA's Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

and the Government of Bermuda have pledged cooperation on scientific and educational programs to better protect the endangered North Atlantic humpback whale population.

Together, they will collaborate on research, monitoring and outreach programs that could lead to better managing and protecting this species along its migratory route from the Gulf of Maine to the Caribbean Sea.

Like the Stellwagen Bank sanctuary off the Massachusetts coast and its sister sanctuary in the Dominican Republic, Bermuda is strategically situated between the humpbacks' southern calving and breeding grounds and their northern feeding grounds. With Bermuda located nearly 650 miles east of the North Carolina coast, this partnership could enhance the three nations' unique commitments to protect the species at various points within its migratory route.

A letter of intent signed last month by NOAA and the Bermuda Department of Environmental Protection expresses interest in pursuing collaborative management efforts leading to establishment of a "sister sanctuary" partnership. NOAA and Bermuda intend to work together in the following areas:

- Exchange of whale fluke (tail) photos for Stellwagen Bank/Bermuda humpback whale population studies and related citizen science programs;
- Exchange of technical information, scientific data and practical experiences in managing marine mammal protected areas, including staff exchanges and site visits;
- Development and assessment of methodologies for natural resource protection within marine mammal protected areas; and
- Development, coordination and evaluation of research and monitoring programs, outreach and education programs, and community engagement strategies for management of marine mammal protected areas.

Craig MacDonald, Stellwagen Bank's superintendent, said cooperative sanctuary programs help foster mutual interest and best practices for whale conservation and management.

"Humpback whales are international citizens without passports who recognize no political jurisdictions," MacDonald said. "We share whales with other nations that border their migratory route, just as we share the responsibility for protecting these fascinating animals."



Three humpback whales surrounded by birds in NOAA's Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

[Download here.](#) (Credit: NOAA)

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary encompasses 842 square miles of ocean, stretching between Cape Ann and Cape Cod. Renowned for its remarkable productivity, the sanctuary supports a rich diversity of marine life including 22 species of marine mammals, more than 53 species of seabirds, in excess of 80 species of fishes, and hundreds of marine invertebrates.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and our other [social media channels](#).



Humpback whale dives in the waters of the NOAA Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

[Download here](#). (Credit: NOAA)